

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

August 26, 2003

1. Des Moines and Cedar Rapids – Iowa City Special Goose Season Starts September 1
2. Lakes and Rivers Expected to be Busy for Labor Day Weekend
3. Rabbit and Squirrel Hunting Seasons Open September 1
4. Iowa Seed Growers to Provide Seed for Wildlife Habitat

**DES MOINES AND CEDAR RAPIDS – IOWA CITY SPECIAL
GOOSE SEASON STARTS SEPTEMBER 1**

DES MOINES – The special September Canada goose season begins Monday and runs through Sept. 15 for areas surrounding Des Moines and the Cedar Rapids – Iowa City corridor. This special season is open to all hunters, not just those living in the metro areas.

The two-week special season is in response to a growing Canada goose population in the areas around Des Moines and Cedar Rapids – Iowa City. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has monitored the Canada goose population in Iowa since 1965 and has seen increases in the numbers of resident Canada geese around these metro areas.

Guy Zenner, state waterfowl biologist for the DNR, said the season was set for early September so the majority of geese taken are from the resident population.

“If we held this hunt in December, the harvest would include quite a few geese from other parts of the county. By having it in September, 99 percent of the birds taken will be local birds,” Zenner said. “We are trying to provide an opportunity to hunters to harvest geese at a time when migrating geese are not mixed in with them.”

The Canada goose numbers will not be drastically reduced overnight, but this is a first step toward bringing the numbers down. “It is a difficult task to control a Canada goose population in an urban area,” he said.

Urban areas have ideal habitat for Canada geese, Zenner said. Urban areas have plenty of short grass that geese like for grazing that is close to water for geese to loaf on or to use to escape predators. These geese have excellent nest success rates and, because there are crop fields in the city limits, they do not have to go into the country to feed. Consequently, urban geese have higher survival rates than their country cousins.

“Hunters will need to learn what areas these geese frequent during this time of year versus when the fall migration starts in October if they hope to be successful,” he said.

Since the majority of the land included in the special hunt is privately owned, hunters must have permission to enter the property. Hunters also need to be particularly careful when hunting near urban areas to ensure they are not hunting too close to residences. “Having permission to hunt a particular property does not give hunters the right to ignore the 200 yard rule,” Zenner said.

Information on the special season is available on the DNR website www.iowadnr.com and at license vendors. The daily bag limit for the special season is three, with a possession limit of six. Hunters will need a valid hunting license and the migratory game bird fee, if normally required.

For more information, contact Zenner at 641-357-3517.

###

LAKES AND RIVERS EXPECTED TO BE BUSY FOR LABOR DAY WEEKEND

DES MOINES – The Labor Day holiday represents the unofficial end to summer and Iowa’s recreational boating season. With cooler temperatures predicted for the holiday weekend, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is expecting a busy time on Iowa waters.

Many streams and lakes have low water conditions causing some obstructions to boating. Rod Slings, recreational safety program supervisor for the DNR, said even the experienced boater should use caution this weekend.

“These low water levels can reveal rocks or old stumps that have not been an issue during normal or high water times and boaters need to be on the lookout for these obstructions,” Slings said. “We want people to enjoy their time on the water and for their weekend to be safe.”

Slings said boat operators should avoid alcohol while operating a watercraft and be courteous to other boaters. Water patrol officers with the Iowa DNR have made a

number of boating while intoxicated arrests this summer and will be patrolling the water this holiday weekend.

For more information, contact Slings at 515-281-8652.

###

IOWA RABBIT AND SQUIRREL HUNTING SEASONS OPEN SEPTEMBER 1

BOONE - The 2003-2004 hunting seasons for cottontail rabbits and fox and gray squirrels open Sept. 1, and hunters will find a significant increase in cottontail rabbits from last fall with all regions reporting higher populations said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Last winter was a very mild by Iowa standards, similar to the extremely mild winter of 2001-02, Bogenschutz said. "We have had great over winter survival of our cottontails with these back to back mild winters. Statewide, our cottontail numbers are at the highest level we've seen since 1990."

Bogenschutz predicts cottontail hunters should have very good hunting this year. The DNR's roadside survey indicates the southern third of Iowa will offer the best rabbit numbers this fall.

"There are several effective techniques that may be employed to hunt rabbits including stomping brush piles, walking slowly through abandoned farmsteads or along brushy fence rows, or wooded draws," Bogenschutz said. "The best form of rabbit hunting is done with the companionship of one or more beagles." Beagles and other trailing dogs can increase hunter success and improve the quality of the hunt. The cottontail season remains open until February 28, 2004, the daily bag limit is 10, and the possession limit is 20. Shooting hours are from sunrise to sunset.

Squirrel numbers are hard to estimate because the DNR does not survey squirrel populations, but statewide numbers should be similar to last year, according to Todd Gosselink, forest wildlife research biologist for the DNR. Squirrel populations typically peak following good mast years and last fall there was a fair mast crop across eastern and southern Iowa.

Although last years mast production was average, hunting opportunities for squirrels are excellent in Iowa because hunting pressure is low, Gosselink said. In the early 1960s, Iowa had 150,000 squirrel hunters and a harvest of more than 1 million squirrels compared to last fall where 35,400 squirrel hunters harvested 217,000 squirrels in the Hawkeye State. Although habitat for squirrels has increased in the state over the last 30 years, interest in the sport has declined. Gosselink attributes this decline to more

opportunity to hunt other species, like turkey and deer, and the decline in Iowa's rural population.

The squirrel season extends through January 31, 2004, the daily bag limit is six (fox and gray squirrels combined) and the possession limit is 12. There is no restriction on shooting hours. Fox squirrels can be found anywhere there are a few acres of trees, but gray squirrels are generally limited to the heavily forested areas in eastern and southern Iowa.

Squirrel hunting is best done in one of two ways, Gosselink said. "The sit-and-wait technique is used near likely feeding areas such as beneath oak, walnut, or hickory trees or corn-forest edges," he said. "The still-hunting technique is employed by slowly walking through forested areas and stopping frequently to watch for feeding squirrels." The best hunting times usually are during the morning and afternoon feeding hours.

For more information on rabbit hunting, contact Bogenschutz at 515-432-2823. For more information on squirrel hunting, contact Gosselink at 641-774-2958.

###

IOWA SEED GROWERS TO PROVIDE SEED FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT

DES MOINES – The Iowa Seed Growers Association, Pheasants Forever and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources have formed a partnership, called Habitat Check-Off, to provide free native grass and forb seed for additional habitat development.

The Habitat Check-off works like this. When landowner purchases native grass seed from a member of the Iowa Seed Growers Association and requests the habitat check-off form, the grower will provide credit matching 10 percent of the total purchase to the DNR and Pheasants Forever. The seed will be designated for use in the county the purchaser designates. There is no additional cost to landowners to participate.

"All landowners have to do is to request the habitat check-off form," said Ken Herring, private lands program supervisor for the DNR. The Habitat Check-off will help improve private lands habitat for upland game and also help improve water quality by reducing erosion.

The DNR and Pheasants Forever will receive credits in each county where the habitat check-off form is issued and can use those credits to purchase additional seed for habitat development in those counties.

By working with Iowa seed growers, landowners will have access to grasses and forbs native to Iowa.

“With all the private land offered for enrollment in this year’s general Conservation Reserve Program sign-up, there is the potential for tremendous benefits to Iowa upland game,” Herring said. “The only thing landowners have to remember is to ask for the habitat check-off form.”

For more information, contact Herring at 515-281-5529, Matt O’Conner, Pheasants Forever at 563-926-2357, or Dan Allen, Iowa Seed Growers Association, at 515-462-1241.

###